

Overprotection, Surveillance, and the Development of Virtue¹

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Abstract. The overarching thesis of this paper is that the surveillance society risks undermining the ability of its citizens to develop moral virtues for the same sort of reason that overprotective parenting can impair the moral development of children. In Section 1, I review the psychological evidence linking overprotective parenting of a certain sort to impaired moral development in children. In Sections 2 and 3 I go on to offer an explanation of this link: the overprotection carries with it an overt, disaffective excess of surveillance that vitiates a plausible condition on the development of virtues derived from Aristotle. I conclude in Section 4 by pointing out that the networked monitoring systems that pervade the surveillance society carry with them a similar kind of surveillance, which makes that society's citizens as unlikely to meet the development condition as the overprotected children.

1

Research on the psychological effects of parental rearing commonly appeals to two general dimensions in its categorization of distinct parenting styles: an affective dimension that pertains to the predominant emotional attitudes the parent bears toward the child, and a regulatory dimension pertaining to the parent's governance of the child's behavior and experiences. Baumrind (1966, 1978), for example, famously distinguished three styles: *permissive*, which shies away from governance in general; *authoritarian*, which governs with little sympathy for child's own desires and concerns; and *authoritative*, where the governance proceeds with due sensitivity to the child's own interests. Similarly, Parker et al. (1979)'s construction of the Parental Bonding Instrument (a questionnaire designed to elicit information about parental style from subjects' recollections of their parents' behavior)² was based on

¹ This paper owes its primary inspiration to my discussions with Professor Ian Kerr (Canada Research Chair in Law, Ethics, and Technology, University of Ottawa) about his concept of *moral disability* in the context of emerging information technologies, and is intended as part of a larger project with Professor Kerr and Jason Millar aimed at exploring that concept.

² Other tools of this sort include the Child's Report of Parental Behavior Inventory, or CRPBI (Schaefer 1965), and the *Egna Minnen Beträffande Uppfostran*, or EMBU (Perris et al. 1980). In these too, there is a central appeal to affective and regulatory dimensions. The EMBU's various subscales of parental style divide generally into ones concerning parental emotional attitudes (e.g. shaming, rejecting, affectionate, favoring) and governance (e.g. punitive, over-involved, tolerant, stimulating). And Schaefer (1965: 414)

evidence that an affective variable – *care* – and a regulatory one – *control* or *protection* – are the principle elements of the parental contribution to the parent-child bond. The PBI thus carves out distinct parenting styles that include average (defined as the statistical norm of the care and control variables), high care-low control/protection, low care-low control/protection, high care-high control/protection, and low care-high control/protection. (Parker et al. 1979: 7-8; Parker 1983: 121ff)

Parental overprotection is usually characterized by appeal to the regulatory dimension highlighted by such research. Baumrind suggested that overprotection is to be found primarily in the regulatory excesses characteristic of the authoritarian style (Baumrind 1966: 899). Within the PBI's framework, two styles of parenting sharply contrasted along the affective dimension – low care-high control/protection ("affectionless control") and high care-high control/protection ("affectionate constraint") – both count as forms of overprotection because of their unity along the regulatory dimension of control/protection. (Parker et al. 1979; Parker 1983: 121ff)

In an early clinical study, Levy (1943) noted that the typical manifestations of parental overprotection include *excessive contact* (e.g. accompanying the child to her social activities; sleeping with the child; frequently kissing or patting the child), *infantilization* (e.g. prolonged periods of breast-feeding, dressing, and washing the child; frequently inquiring about the child's cleanliness or studies; repeatedly checking on the child in the middle of the night), and *prevention of independent behavior* (e.g. discouraging the child from forming friendships; prohibiting chores and recreational activities; delaying the child's schooling; accompanying the child to, and frequently visiting her at, school; confronting the child's enemies; refusing the child an allowance to spend at her discretion), all of which are forms of regulatory excess. So too are the features that more recent clinicians and theorists have added to the list, such as *intrusion* and *encouragement of dependency*. (Parker et al. 1983: 93)

Where parental overprotection is so understood – as involving excessive or above average regulation of the child's behavior and experiences – there is evidence that it is a risk factor for a number of psychological problems in overprotected subjects, at least when combined with a deficiency along the affective dimension.

noted that, despite the numerous fine-grained distinctions about parenting style that may be drawn within it, the CRPBI has as its "most molar and abstract concepts ... factor dimensions of love versus hostility and autonomy versus control."

Such (as I will call it) *disaffective*³ *regulatory excess* has been linked in studies to drug addiction (Andersson & Eisemann 2003), disruptive behavior disorders (Rey & Plapp 1990, Joyce et al. 1994, Mak 1996), depression (Parker et al. 1987), likelihood of being bullied (Rigby et al. 1999), antisocial personality disorder (Reti et al. 2002), school phobia (Torma & Halsti 1975, Coolidge & Brodie 1974), agoraphobia (de Ruiten 1994), obsessive-compulsive disorder (Yoshida et al. 2005, de Ruiten 1994), hypochondriasis (Parker 1983, Koupernik 1973), anxiety disorder (Clayer et al. 1984), dependent personality disorder and failures of autonomy (Ruchkin 1998, Parker 1983, Howe & Madgett 1975, Kagan & Moss 1962: Ch. 7), over-inhibited personality (Wergeland 1979), and dissociation (Offen et al. 2003). Parker provides an illustrative clinical example of the perceived connection between parental overprotection and psychological disorder, from a 26 year-old pharmacist's self-report:

There was a time when I regarded life as an avalanche of fears. It was impossible to get through a day without experiencing panic.... For example, someone calling my name in the school ground, or the ringing of the school bell. The school boy calling my name might want me to accept a responsibility for him, and I knew I would be too timid to say no.... The school bell meant the possibility of a confrontation with my teacher who would ask me a question which I could not answer and then criticize me for my failure....

So why this terror of life? Where did it start? I guess I got the impression that life was very dangerous from my parents. They always seemed apprehensive about anything and everything. Whenever anything was discussed a very large warning would be attached....

So my illogical panics are partly tied up to the example set by my parents. But there was something else which probably played a far bigger role in creating these panics.

My parents overprotected me.

Why did they overprotect me? Because a country doctor, who had served with distinction at Gallipoli, and had not read a medical journal since, told my mother that I would have to be protected from head injuries after I had taken several convulsions. Convulsions triggered by a temperature of 40 [degrees] C, not brought on by physical trauma.

If I got the opportunity to ride a children's pony that had been raised especially for the purpose, my mother would insist on holding the reins just in case the damn thing broke into a murderous gallop. I came to the conclusion that I was different, more fragile, less capable of fending for myself than others....

At the beginning I resisted their overprotectiveness. But as time went by I was worn down to a state where I just gave up and did whatever my parents wanted me to do. The more

³ This term is meant to be a very broad one, covering whatever deficiencies along the affective dimension that the relevant studies pick out. The deficiencies need not always (but often may) involve outright negative sentiments of rejection, hostility, etc.; they may in various cases simply involve insufficiently strong attitudes of warmth, acceptance, etc.

dependent I became on my mother the more frightened I became of using my own initiative. The few times I did use my initiative I fell flat on my face and so resolved never to try anything again without my mother's advice and support. This led to a situation where I was afraid and unable to make even the smallest decisions without first going to my mother and asking her advice. I became 100 percent dependent on her.

My school work suffered because I couldn't make sense of anything unless my mother explained it to me.... My initiative dropped to zero. I was unable to formulate an original idea because I was afraid to do it without first going to my mother. If my mother was not available I'd copy someone else's work, even if that student was hopeless....

Every now and again I would break away and do something I considered reckless and even dangerous. First a trip to Tasmania and then six months in Palestine, hoping that these experiences would somehow bring about a magical change in my personality. But the fears remained and I found myself substituting others for my mother.

It is only recently that I've started to say no when asked to do a favour. I'm afraid of alienating myself from people who have to some degree taken the place of my mother and adviser. If I offend them then they won't be around when I need them to lean on. (Parker 1983: 7-8)

2

Although the inference from psychological to moral disorder clearly does not hold across the board, I think research such as the foregoing may reasonably be thought to provide some empirical evidence for a connection between parental overprotection of the disaffective sort and an interference with the ability of overprotected subjects to acquire and maintain – i.e. to develop – those sorts of character traits we call moral virtues, e.g. tolerance, courage, honesty, friendliness, generosity, kindness, sociability, dignity, industriousness, tastefulness, and fairness. Characterizations of a subject's psychological condition as *disruptive*, *antisocial*, *dependent*, *inhibited*, *anxious*, etc. are ones that suggest the absence or inadequate possession of typical virtues. What I am suggesting, accordingly, is that there is evidence to believe that parental overprotection involving disaffective regulatory excess impacts the overprotected subject's moral character negatively, in the sense that it tends to vitiate the conditions required for the subject properly to develop moral virtues.⁴

⁴ I am aware that arguments have occasionally been made (e.g. Doris 1998, Harman 1999 & 2000) to the effect that social psychological studies concerned with the diachronic and cross-situational consistency of external behavior indicate that, contrary to common sense, there really are no such things as moral virtues. I simply find the arguments (which is not to say the studies they appeal to) unpersuasive. For compelling diagnoses of where the arguments go wrong, see Athanassoulis (2000), Kupperman (2001) and Sreenivasan (2002).

If that is a reasonable conclusion to draw, we may still wonder why it should be so. What explains the correlation between overprotective parenting and interference with the overprotected subject's ability to acquire and maintain moral virtue? In the remainder of this section, I would like to offer a tentative hypothesis by way of answer to this question. My hypothesis will stem partly from a consideration of the epistemic nature of the sort of parental overprotection under consideration, and partly from a lesson about the development of moral virtue that Aristotle first impressed upon us.

2.1

Parental overprotection, we have seen, involves excessive regulation of the child's behavior and experiences that is often disaffective in nature. But the excess of regulation, whether disaffective or not, would seem to go hand in hand with an excess of epistemic contact between the parent and child, effected by the parent and manifest to the child. To see this, consider the hallmarks of parental overprotection mentioned above. Each of them serves as a tool for the regulation of the child's behavior or experiences by affording the parent greater and more frequent opportunities for overt *surveillance* of the child, i.e. overt observation of the child with the intent to modify her behavior and experiences if necessary. Excessive contact and intrusion – clearly the sorts of things of which the child is aware – would be of no regulatory use if they didn't bring the parent greater knowledge of the child's present circumstances and activity; infantilization keeps the older child in the sorts of conditions that permitted her constant, overt monitoring as an infant; and the prevention independent behavior and encouragement of dependency manifestly limit the opportunities for the child to engage and be engaged by the world outside the scope of the parent's watchful eye. Simply put, parental overprotection in general involves excessive overt surveillance, a connection that is explained in light of the regulatory ends of overprotection. In which case the sort of parental overprotection most commonly implicated in studies linking it to psychological problems, viz. disaffective regulatory excess on the part of the parent, may be said to involve a corresponding disaffective excess of surveillance that is typically overt in nature.

2.2

In Book II of his *Nicomachean Ethics*, Aristotle considers what sort of psychological features moral virtues are. That they are not affective occurrences (emotions, experiences), he claims, is indicated by the fact that their presence or absence is frequently a matter of responsibility: sometimes, at least, it makes sense to praise an individual for having a virtue, for example; but it never makes sense to praise her simply for having an emotion or experience. Nor does it seem correct to think of moral virtues as mere capacities or faculties, since we are endowed with these by nature, whereas virtues come by design. The virtues, he reasons, are thus most appropriately thought of as dispositions (Aristotle [c. 350 BCE] 1980: 35-36 [1105b5-28])

The particular kind of dispositions of which the virtues consist is brought out by a consideration of their connection to morally praiseworthy behavior, which entails not merely doing the right thing morally, but doing it in the right way: the would-be assailant whose noisy approach frightens off another unjust attacker may well be doing the right thing, but is hardly deserving of praise for it. Three things, Aristotle suggests, can be said of praiseworthy behavior. First, the individual who performs it is aware, or knows, that what she is doing is in fact the right thing (the “cognitive” dimension of virtue, as opposed to its “emotional” or “affective” one, in Sherman (1989)’s and Burnyeat (1999)’s terminology). Second, her performance is motivated by a desire to do the right thing, which itself in some sense flows from her knowledge that it is the right thing.⁵ And, third, this knowledge-desire combination that stands behind the behavior reflects a deeply entrenched, stable part of the individual’s psyche. (Aristotle [c. 350 BCE] 1980: 34-35 [1105a17-b5])

Each of these three things points to an aspect common to every moral virtue understood as a disposition to behave in a morally praiseworthy manner. Moral virtues thus turn out on Aristotle’s account to be deep-seated psychological dispositions to do the right thing (in the relevant context), based on a desire to do the right thing because it is known to be, i.e. recognized as, such.

If that is what moral virtues are, how are they acquired and maintained? They emerge from the hand of design, for Aristotle, not from that of nature. But

⁵ That the desire originates in this way from the individual’s knowledge of the right thing means, for Aristotle, that it is a kind of choice – a choice to do the right thing for its own sake. (Aristotle [c. 350 BCE] 1980: 53-58 [1111b1-1113a13]) As McDowell (1996) stresses, however, it would be a mistake to suppose that, even for Aristotle, the knowledge that grounds the choice must be an overly intellectualized process. In many cases it may be akin to a kind of intuitive perception rather than explicit, methodical inference.

what kind of design promotes their development? What is the process whereby the individual develops into a person of virtue, replete with a wide array of the relevant dispositions to act rightly in the right way? Two elements of Aristotle's answer to that question are well known: guidance and practice. As in the case of the acquisition of skill in the practical sciences and arts, the acquisition of moral virtue requires both the direction of teachers and the opportunity to apply that guidance by repeated action. As Baumrind has recently put it: "Aristotle claimed, and I agree, that states of character [i.e. virtues and vices] arise out of one's activities – activities that are directed by one's elders during youth. If a child can be induced to act prosocially in sufficient and varied situations, he or she will become prosocial." (Baumrind 1998: 11) And in Aristotle's own words:

[I]t is from playing the lyre that both good and bad lyre-players are produced. And the corresponding statement is true of builders and of all the rest; [there] will be good or bad builders as a result of building well or badly. For if this were not so, there would have been no need of a teacher, but all would have been born good ... at their craft. This then, is the case with the virtues also; by doing the acts that we do in our transactions with other[s]... we become just or unjust, and by doing the acts that we do in the presence of danger, and by being habituated to feel fear or confidence, we become brave or cowardly. (Aristotle [c. 350 BCE] 1980: 29 [1103a33-b25])

The practice, of course, is what gives the relevant dispositions their stable, deep-seated quality: if an individual repeats an action in the right way enough times, the disposition to perform it in that way will become second nature to her. The guidance is what ensures that it is the right sort of disposition that gets so deeply entrenched. Since to count as a moral virtue the disposition must involve both knowledge of the morally right thing to do and a consequential desire to do it because it is so recognized, *proper* guidance for Aristotle, as a condition on the development of moral virtue, will aim to secure both the knowledge and desire. The moral teacher, in other words, must guide her students not only by making it sufficiently clear to them (perhaps by explicit instruction, perhaps by drawing her attention to example of role models) which sorts of actions are the right ones in the relevant contexts, but also by finding ways to foster in them the desire to perform those actions because they are recognized as such. Part of the point of Aristotle's discussion on the connection between virtue and pleasure is precisely the latter one. People must, he insists, "be brought up from childhood to feel pleasure and pain at the proper things; for this is the correct education." (Aristotle [c. 350 BCE] 1980: 32

[1104b16]) Find ways to make right behavior (recognized as such) appealing to children, encourage them to feel a sense of accomplishment or satisfaction in the performance of moral behavior *qua* moral behavior, and you make great progress in the attempt to secure the development of their moral character.

If we join the guidance element, in both its knowledge and desire aspects, with the practice element, we get something like the following very general condition as necessary in Aristotle's view for the individual's initial acquisition and continued maintenance of any moral virtue:

Development Condition: the individual must be encouraged repeatedly to do the morally right thing (in the relevant context) because she recognizes it as such and desires to do it as a result of this recognition.

2.3

Consider now the relationship between the Development Condition and what, in Section 2.1, I singled out as a central feature of the sort of overprotective parenting considered in Section 1, viz. overt, disaffective, excessive surveillance (or ODE-surveillance for short). I can think of two main reasons why the relationship may not be a happy one – two reasons, that is, to believe that ODE-surveillance may well undermine the possibility of satisfying the Development Condition. Both reasons are reflected in the clinical example from Parker relayed in Section 1.

First, it seems clear that if an individual is subject to ODE-surveillance by an authority figure – by someone with the power to regulate her behavior, either directly by arresting it or indirectly by altering the circumstances and experiences with which it is intimately connected – then she will be aware, at least on some implicit level, both of the observation of which the surveillance consists and of its regulatory function. The overt nature of the ODE-surveillance ensures that she will be so aware of the observation, and the fact that it is disaffective reinforces for her the regulatory point of it. (The authority figure is not, after all, observing her as one would an admired performer.) And it is not hard to see that this awareness on the part of the individual can foster in her a sense of inevitability: she knows, given her awareness of the ODE-surveillance, that behavior out of line with the authority figure's preferred standards of conduct will eventually be eliminated (on pain of suffering the unpleasant consequences of the authority figure's punishment or

correction), making behavior in line with those standards a virtually unavoidable result.

What sort of psychological impact is this sense of the inevitable likely to have on the individual who is subjected to ODE-surveillance? Presumably, it won't remove her motivation for acting altogether: she will continue to negotiate the world. But I do think it will shape – indeed, *warp* might not be the wrong word – her motivation for acting such that it increasingly (the more excessive the ODE-surveillance becomes) resembles little more than an extension of the authority. The extent to which the individual continues to act, in other words, will increasingly be an extent to which her behavior is motivated by a desire that flows not from the knowledge that the behavior is the right thing to do morally (even in cases where it is), but rather from the knowledge that that it is, effectively, the sort of thing that will have to be done eventually anyway, and so might as well be gotten on with. As the subject of Parker's example notes, although there was an initial period in which he resisted his parents' efforts, the resistance soon gave way to relinquishment. "I just gave up," he reports, "and did whatever my parents wanted me to do."

The more, however, that the individual's behavior is motivated by this desire to perform the inevitable, the less likely it is that she will be able to satisfy the Development Condition with her behavior. The individual who is subjected to ODE-surveillance and thereby comes to see certain forms of behavior as inevitable becomes increasingly unable to act with the sort of motivation required by that condition. What she tends to have entrenched in her psyche are accordingly not virtues on the Aristotelian conception – dispositions to do the right thing because of a desire to do it, recognized as such – but rather dispositions to *something* (whether right or not – it doesn't really matter) because of a desire to get on with what she knows she'll eventually have to anyway.

Thus, the first reason for thinking that an individual who is subject to ODE-surveillance may well be prevented from satisfying the Development Condition – call it the *sense of the inevitable* – is this: the individual subjected to ODE-surveillance will have a heightened sense of the inevitability of conforming her behavior to the standards of conduct preferred by the authority who conducts the ODE-surveillance; this sense of the inevitable is likely to create the conditions wherein her behavior becomes motivated by a desire to do the inevitable; and that motivation pushes the sort of motivation required by the Development Condition off the stage.

The second reason can best be brought out by recalling a point stressed by Fried (1968, 1970) in his work on the moral consequences of excessive surveillance of convicted criminals. Fried argued that to be trusted is to be expected to do the right thing in situations where one is able to do the wrong thing; “[t]here can be no trust,” as he put it, “where there is no possibility of error.” (Fried 1968: 486) Moreover being able to do the wrong thing requires some freedom from overt surveillance by authorities. Were one’s overt surveillance by authorities complete, so too would be the absence of trust by authorities; for complete, overt surveillance is precisely a means of securing the right sort of behavior in the *absence* of trust.

Fried goes on to draw our attention to the role that overt surveillance plays in the self-perception of the individual who knows that she is the object of the surveillance. Just as freedom from complete, overt surveillance is necessary for some degree of trust, so freedom from complete, overt surveillance is necessary for seeing oneself, to some degree, as trusted: “a man cannot know that he is trusted unless he has a right to act without constant surveillance so that he knows that he can betray the trust.” (Fried 1968: 486) And this seems to be especially true when it comes to ODE-surveillance, for in that case the individual is aware not just of the overt nature of the surveillance but of its regulatory end.

Where an individual is under ODE-surveillance, then, it becomes considerably difficult for her to see herself as trusted by the authority who subjects her to the surveillance. The inability to see herself as trusted by the authority does not of course itself imply that the individual is unable in any way to see herself as trustworthy. Surely, in the usual course of events, seeing oneself as trustworthy requires positive feedback from others to the effect that one is trusted; and seeing oneself in the light of the negative feedback of an authority is consistent with seeing oneself in the light of the positive feedback of others yet. The trouble, however, is that ODE-surveillance has the effect of making the negative feedback salient in a very wide range of contexts – every one in which the surveillance occurs, which by hypothesis is a great many: in the majority of situations in which the individual finds herself, she acts with the uncomfortable knowledge that she is not trusted by someone. I don’t think it’s much of a stretch to suppose that under such conditions, the individual will have a good deal of difficulty seeing herself as trustworthy in her behavior.

If this is right, then the individual who is subjected to ODE-surveillance will tend to become insecure about her own abilities to act in the right sorts of ways.

Once again, barring a complete breakdown, she will continue to act. But with the sense of insecurity brought about by the ODE-surveillance, the motivation for her actions will typically borrow from the direction of the authority who conducts the surveillance. What prompts her behavior will not typically be a desire to do the morally right thing flowing from the knowledge that it is the right thing, but rather a desire to do what the authority has directed flowing partly from a doubt about her own ability to discern the right thing.

The second reason for thinking that the individual who is subjected to ODE-surveillance may be unable to satisfy the Development Condition – call it the *sense of insecurity* – can, accordingly, be succinctly captured as follows: the individual subjected to ODE-surveillance is likely to have an exaggerated sense of insecurity, i.e. doubt about her own ability to determine the morally right thing to do (in the relevant context), created by her awareness in a great many contexts of the fact that she is not trusted in those contexts; this sense of insecurity in turn leads typically to the wrong sort of motivation for her behavior to satisfy the requirements of the Development Condition. Her behavior comes to be motivated at least partly by a desire to act that stems from a doubt about her own ability to know what's right, and not by one stemming from a secure knowledge of what's right. This reason too finds expression in Parker's clinical example. The relinquishment that followed the subject's initial period of resistance was accompanied by an alarming degree of self-doubt: "The more dependent I became on my mother," the subject writes, "the more frightened I became of using my own initiative. The few times I did use my initiative I fell flat on my face and so resolved never to try anything again without my mother's advice and support."

3

At the beginning of Section 2, I suggested that the psychological considerations reviewed in Section 1 provided some evidence for the claim that parental overprotection of the relevant sort tends to impair the overprotected individual's ability to develop moral virtues. We are now in a position to arrange the central considerations of 2.1-2.3 into the tentative hypothesis I also promised by way of an explanation of this claim. Where moral virtues are plausibly understood as deep-seated psychological dispositions to do the right thing, morally, in the right way, their acquisition is subject to something like the Development Condition drawn from

Aristotle: an individual must be encouraged regularly to do the right thing, where this behavior is motivated by a desire to do the right thing based on the knowledge that it is (in the relevant context) indeed the right thing. When one considers the nature of disaffective parental overprotection however – a kind of excessive regulation of the child's behavior combined with deficiency of affective relations to the child – it characteristically turns out to involve ODE-surveillance, i.e. overt, disaffective excessive surveillance of the child. And ODE-surveillance in turn tends to discourage satisfaction of the Development Condition, either because it fosters in the child a sense of the inevitable or a sense of insecurity (or both), thereby creating the conditions wherein her behavior is motivated by the wrong sort of desire.

4

The predictive scope of this explanation increases dramatically if we consider an analogy between parental overprotection of the sort we have discussed and the prospect of the surveillance society. By 'the surveillance society' I mean a society wherein the use of networked monitoring systems – sets of information technology devices connected in such a way as to record, share, transmit, and extrapolate from information about individuals across large swaths of space and time – is ubiquitous. In his popular (1998) book, *The Transparent Society*, Brin provides a simplified glimpse of one form that the surveillance society might take:

Consider city number one. In this place, all the myriad cameras report their urban scenes straight to Police Central, where security officers use sophisticated image processors to scan for infractions against public order – or perhaps against an established way of thought. Citizens walk the streets aware that any word or deed may be noted by agents of some mysterious bureau. (Brin 1998: 4)

Another form, Brin suggests, is perhaps a bit less sinister and Orwellian in its structure, but no less saturated with networked monitoring systems:

At first sight, things seem quite similar in city number two. Again, ubiquitous cameras perch on every vantage point. Only here we soon find a crucial difference. The devices do *not* report to the secret police. Rather, each and every citizen of this metropolis can use his or her wristwatch television to call up images from any camera in town.

Here a late-evening stroller checks to make sure no one lurks beyond the corner she is about to turn.

Over there a tardy young man dials to see if his dinner date still waits for him by a city fountain.

A block away, and anxious parent scans the area to find which way her child wandered off.

Over by the mall, a teenage shoplifter is taken into custody gingerly, with minute attention to ritual and rights, because the arresting officer knows that the entire process is being scrutinized by untold numbers who watch intently, lest her neutral professionalism lapse.

In city number two ... any citizen may tune in on bookings, arraignments, and especially the camera control room itself, making sure that the agents on duty look out for violent crime, and only crime. (Brin 1998: 4)

The cameras in these descriptions represent the surveillance society's networked monitoring systems, which take various forms, some of which are already upon us. Brin (2004) provides a descriptive sampling:

Radio frequency identification (RFID) technology will soon replace the simple, passive bar codes on packaged goods, substituting inexpensive chips that respond to microwave interrogation, making every box of toothpaste or razor blades part of a vast, automatic inventory accounting system. Wal-Mart announced in 2003 that it will require its top 100 suppliers to use RFID on all large cartons, for purposes of warehouse inventory keeping. But that is only the beginning. Inevitably as prices fall, RFID chips will be incorporated into most products and packaging.

Supermarket checkout will become a breeze, when you simply push your cart past a scanner and grab a printout receipt, with every purchase automatically debited from your account.

... Under development are smart washers that will read the tags on clothing and adjust their cycles accordingly, and smart medicine cabinets that track tagged prescriptions, in order to warn which ones have expired or need refilling. Cars and desks and computers will adjust to your preferred settings as you approach. Paramedics may download your health status – including allergies and dangerous drug-conflicts – even if you are unable to speak.

... [Y]our clothing and innocuous possessions will carry cheap tags of their own that can be associated with their owners.... Already some schools – especially in Asia – are experimenting with RFID systems that will locate all students, at all times....

Wait, there's more. For example, a new Internet protocol (IPv6) will vastly expand available address space in the virtual world.

The present IP, offering 32-bit data labels, can now offer every living human a unique online address, limiting direct access to something like 10 billion Web pages or specific computers. In contrast, IPv6 will use 128 bits. This will allow the virtual tagging of every cubic centimeter of the earth's surface, from sea level to mountaintop, spreading a multidimensional data overlay across the planet. Every tagged or manmade object may participate, from your wristwatch to a nearby lamppost, vending machine or trash can – even most of the discarded contents of the trash can.

... Not long after this, teens and children will purchase rolls of ultra-cheap digital eyes and casually stick them onto walls. Millions of those 'penny cams' will join the fun, contributing to the vast IPv6 datasphere....

Driven partly by security demands, a multitude of biometric technologies will identify individuals by scanning physical attributes, from fingerprints, iris patterns, faces and voices to brainwaves and possibly unique chemical signatures.... When your car recognizes your face, and all the stores can verify your fingerprint, what need will you have for keys or a credit card?

The name itself, of course, highlights the fact that the surveillance society is shot-through with surveillance – even if the “authorities” who carry it out are decentralized masses of everyday people. The important point I want to stress is that the surveillance is of the same sort as that involved in disaffective parental overprotection: ODE-surveillance. The overt nature of surveillance within the surveillance society need not stem from a constant, explicit, forefront-of-consciousness awareness on the part of the individuals who are subject to it, but it is surely there at some level of awareness. (Even for those as technologically unsophisticated as myself, there is a constant back-of-the-mind awareness of those networked monitoring systems already prevalent in our society. The surveillance activity of my car’s event data recorder – including a record even of such things as the rate at which the brake pedal is depressed on any given occasion! – was laid out for me clearly in the car’s operating manual, and remains in my mind every time I start the ignition; the occasional sounding of the door alarm at the library reminds me of a central function of the embedded identification tags in my library books; media reports and itemized monthly telephone bills keep me aware of the potential uses of telephone and Internet activity logs; and the aesthetically unappealing appearance of closes circuit television cameras, along with the equally distasteful signs announcing their presence, frequently keeps me cognizant of their purpose in public areas.) And there are good reasons why the surveillance activity of the monitoring systems is bound to be overt. Were it possible, rendering the surveillance covert on a regular basis would amount to something as morally repugnant as spying or unwanted voyeurism. But it is not clearly possible at all, in any practical sense. After all, how can there be ubiquitous observation – watching and watching the watchers – without both the watchers and counter-watchers being aware of it, at some level?

The disaffectiveness of the surveillance that pervades the surveillance society arises, I think, from its technologically mediated nature. It’s hard enough to see the on-duty police officer one encounters face to face in a positive affective light (and

this is no reflection on her motives or competence): a uniformed representative of enforcement is more naturally seen as a critical appraiser than as a beneficent caretaker. It's harder yet to see the ever watchful eye of the close circuit cameras, RFID technologies, on-line tracking devices, or what have you – pick your favorite networked monitoring system – as a warm, affectionate presence. The very best one can hope for when it comes to these instruments of surveillance, I suspect, is a sense of neutrality along affective lines.

And, finally, the networked character of the monitoring systems that effect surveillance in the surveillance society, together with their continuous operation, renders that surveillance excessive, at least in the sense that the amount of information about individuals they acquire is far beyond the amount that would be acquired by other, let's call them "old-fashioned," forms of surveillance (e.g. the police officer walking the beat, the car mechanic or insurance company representative gathering information about one's activity with the car by asking questions, physically inspecting it in person, etc.).

But now consider: if it is indeed true that the surveillance society shares with disaffective overprotective parenting a link to ODE-surveillance, it is reasonable to predict that life in the surveillance society will be no more conducive to the development of virtue than life as an overprotected child. The overprotection implies ODE-surveillance, and the likely effects of that on the overprotected individual – a warping of her motivation due to the sense of the inevitable, or to the sense of insecurity – tend to undermine the conditions required for her development of virtue. In a similar fashion, the surveillance society implies ODE-surveillance, and the likely effects of that on *citizens* prevent the conditions required for *their* development of virtue. Citizens of the surveillance society, like overprotected children, run the risk of becoming morally impaired in a most fundamental way, one that goes to their very character as moral agents.

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